

The City Grapevine

June/July 2005



Intersection of IL 64 & Oak Street (Adjacent to the Oak Street Post Office)

On Monday, April 11, 2005, the United States Post Office opened for retail business in St. Charles at their new location at 2600 Oak Street, just south of IL 64, and west of Randall Road. This retail opening follows approximately a two-year use of the facility as a Postal Sorting Center. The delay in opening the Post Office for retail service was contingent upon an understanding between the Post Office and City. This understanding provided for the Post Office not opening until a traffic signal was operational at the intersection of IL 64 and Oak Street.

The Post Office diligently worked with the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), the authority who allows for the installation of traffic signals on IL 64, to meet the State justification or warrant permitting a signal to be installed at this intersection. When IDOT approved the warrant for a traffic signal to be installed at IL 64 and Oak Street, they coupled that approval with a requirement for the roadway, both east and west of Oak Street along IL 64, to be widened from the current three-lane to a five-lane section. The extent of this widening project would commence, generally, at Campton Hills Road on the west and end short of the intersection of IL 64 and Randall Road. The cost for this improvement is estimated to exceed \$1,000,000.

The U.S. Post Office, the City of St. Charles and IDOT do not have sufficient funds to cover this expense. Given funding levels and an uncertainty about when funding would be available, the Post Office chose to open their facility. Acknowledging access to and from Oak Street will be difficult when traffic is heavy along IL 64, the City would request motorists exhibit caution at this location. Simultaneously, the City will continue to work with IDOT to pursue installation of signals at this location, as well as

funding for the IDOT-required roadway widening that would need to accompany or follow within a timely fashion the installation of traffic signals at the intersection of IL 64 and Oak Street. Please drive defensively!

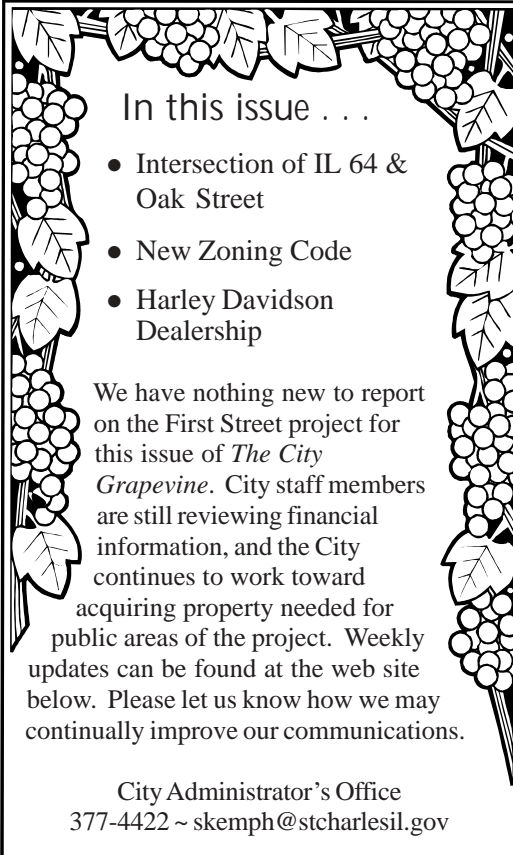
New Zoning Code

Last issue, we introduced the draft of the new St. Charles Zoning Ordinance by presenting information about why a new ordinance is needed and some of the significant differences between the draft and the current ordinance, which originated in 1960. This issue presents some of the key outcomes we hope to achieve with the new ordinance.

Preserve neighborhoods while allowing for growth and change. As St. Charles matures, the focus of development will shift from open fields on the edge of town to infill and redevelopment. In residential neighborhoods, we will see more of the “teardown” and “infill” phenomenon that has been occurring in communities east of us, like Hinsdale. To what extent should we be concerned when builders tear down smaller homes in order to construct much larger ones? What can be done so that new homes fit into older neighborhoods? The new zoning ordinance tries to deal with these

challenges.

Older neighborhoods have a wide variety of home sizes and styles, which were typically built out over several decades. Newer neighborhoods, established since 1945, have homes that are usually more uniform, having been built over a shorter period of time or even all at once. The new ordinance recognizes these differences by establishing two different types of zoning districts for residential neighborhoods, “traditional” for the older neighborhoods and “suburban” for the newer ones. These districts will enable different approaches as conditions change and the factors



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We have nothing new to report on the First Street project for this issue of *The City Grapevine*. City staff members are still reviewing financial information, and the City continues to work toward acquiring property needed for public areas of the project. Weekly updates can be found at the web site below. Please let us know how we may continually improve our communications.

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driving the “teardown” phenomenon affect neighborhoods differently over time.

Older neighborhoods are most likely to be the first candidates for “teardowns.” Consequently, the new ordinance includes size and height regulations carefully tailored to older neighborhoods. These allow reasonable additions and replacement homes, but will prohibit homes that are completely out of scale with their neighbors. The new ordinance also includes a process for “Residential Architectural Consultation.” Builders and homeowners will be required to meet with a City staff member to review appropriate architectural design strategies. The ordinance is not written to require adherence to these strategies, but we hope that by offering guidance we will encourage more appropriate design to retain and enhance the character and livability of our neighborhoods.

Provide quality design, attractive landscaping, and appropriate lighting. The new ordinance is intended to improve the attractiveness and functionality of new commercial and multi-family developments. In the past, we have relied on a negotiated approach, with mixed results. Under the new ordinance, City staff will review plans for conformance with design standards such as, “Provide pedestrian connections between adjoining uses,” and, “Roofs should be designed to add visual interest to the building, conceal service equipment, and establish the building’s identity.” Enhanced landscaping will be required for parking lots, around buildings, and between differing uses. And finally, exterior lighting will have to be designed to avoid excessive glare and to enhance pedestrian and motorist safety.

What’s Next? The last of four Public Forums was held on May 24. During June and July, the Zoning Commission will hold a series of meetings to consider public comments received at the Forums. In late August or early September, there will be a formal public hearing, where the final draft will be presented. If you have a question about how your property might be affected, or a comment about the new ordinance, please contact Bob Hupp, Director of Community Development, or Rita Tungare, Senior Planner, at 377-4443 or by email at bhupp@stcharlesil.gov or rtungare@stcharlesil.gov. The full text and map of the draft new zoning ordinance is available online at www.stcharlesil.org/departments/cdd/newzoningordinance.html.

Harley-Davidson Dealership

Harley-Davidson’s proposal to develop 37 acres of property currently owned by the Kane County Fair Board (an independent not-for-profit organization) has sparked a discussion about image, noise, traffic and the economic benefit. Heightening the concern over these three issues is the request by the developer to hold several fundraising

rallies that would attract a number of motorcycle enthusiasts. While these events could already be held on the fairgrounds, it is felt that the proximity of the dealership to the fairgrounds will further encourage this activity. Recognizing that St. Charles has many activities that already clog roadways on weekends, final approval of the Harley proposal will be contingent on limiting the number of rallies in order to minimize any negative consequences of these rallies.

Image. Concerns were expressed that some Harley enthusiasts engaged in activities that would negatively impact St. Charles’ quality of life. Others testified that Harley owners are primarily upstanding citizens. In order to better understand this issue, City staff contacted several communities throughout the Midwest where Harley-Davidson dealers were located, and all felt that Harley-Davidson has had a very positive impact on their communities.

Noise. While the development will be approximately 1,800 feet away from the nearest residential area, many of those residents expressed concerns about the potential noise pollution created by motorcycles traveling to and from the dealership. The developers and City staff conducted independent tests to determine the extent of noise that could be generated from the site. Those tests showed that at approximately 300 feet, the noise from the motorcycles could not be distinguished from the surrounding traffic noise.

Traffic. Development of the fairgrounds property will prompt several road improvements in the area. Oak Street will be connected from Randall to Main Street (Rt. 64), and a stoplight will be located at the intersection of Oak and Randall. Although not required at this time, developing this property should also stimulate construction of a stoplight at Oak and Main Street. This development should not be of any greater impact than another commercial development. The various infrastructure improvements may positively impact traffic in the area.

Economic Benefit. Development of the 37 acres is expected to provide more than \$1 million in annual sales tax revenue to the City. In addition, all taxing districts will benefit from the increase in property values. Most importantly, Harley-Davidson is a unique business that will generate new sales taxes, as opposed to transferring sales from other in-town businesses.

Overall, after a great deal of discussion and evaluation, the City Council feels very positively about the benefits that Harley-Davidson will bring to the community. Besides providing significant financial benefits to the City, it is anticipated that Harley will catalyze redevelopment of many more areas along St. Charles’ section of Randall Road.

